

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

Water resources are critical to the health of the communities and the environment along each side of the border within the Lower Rio Grande Valley subarea. Although the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo serves to define the international boundary, it also plays an important role in unifying the historical and cultural context of the region (Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project Task Force, 1994). The management of this important resource, as well as the equitable resolution of present and future conflicts, is of concern to DOI Bureaus with responsibilities in this and adjacent subareas. Therefore, continued cooperation among the DOI Bureaus is necessary to understand and appropriately interact with the Government of Mexico, as well as other Federal, State, and local entities and citizen's groups in order to address the many complex issues relating to the shared-water resources of the region. Important regional goals include implementing solutions to improve water conservation, addressing water-quality and contaminant issues, protecting the viability of local recreational opportunities, and protecting the remaining riparian habitat and the species dependent upon them.

Suggested actions from the DOI perspective include:

- promoting public awareness of the importance of water resources and the value of aquatic and riparian environments of the Lower Rio Grande Valley subarea;
- managing DOI lands in a manner to minimize adverse impacts on water resources and maximize biological integrity, recreational opportunity, and enhancement of habitat for water-dependent flora and fauna;
- developing an improved understanding of existing water uses and the effects of those uses on threatened and endangered species, riparian habitat, biodiversity maintenance, and other water-dependent resources;
- facilitating increased cooperation and collaboration among the Government of Mexico; the States of Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, and Texas; the IBWC; Native American Tribes; and the DOI Bureaus in addressing transboundary water issues affecting lands managed by DOI; and
- ensuring that sufficient water-quantity, water-quality, and biological data are readily available for accessing current conditions and for detecting changing water resource status and trends.

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Authors: Denny Buckler¹, Diana Papoulias¹, George Ozuna², Dennis Woodward³, Mark Flora⁴, and Larry Ditto⁵

GIS and Cartography: Roger Durall³

¹ U.S. Geological Survey, Columbia, Missouri

² U.S. Geological Survey, San Antonio, Texas

³ U.S. Geological Survey, Albuquerque, New Mexico

⁴ National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado

⁵ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, McAllen, Texas